



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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State Department of Agriculture finalist for technology award

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is one of three finalists for a prestigious technology award that recognizes *Outstanding Contribution to Digital Government*. The winner will be announced Feb. 26 at the ninth annual awards dinner of the Washington Software Alliance (WSA).

“This is a real honor to be a finalist for this outstanding award,” said Jim Quigley, manager of WSDA’s fruit and vegetable inspection program. “The Department of Agriculture has made a major effort to use technology to make government run more efficiently. Technology is a vital part of shipping certified fruits and vegetables to consumers at the lowest possible cost.”

During the past two years WSDA has developed an Internet-based system automating the process by which packers report the grade and amount of fruit being shipped to domestic and foreign markets. “We have, in effect, converted paper forms to digital forms, reducing from days to hours the time it takes packers to submit information to WSDA regarding domestic and foreign shipments,” Quigley stated.

Quigley said the automated system is a dramatic improvement over the manual system. Data is being captured and made available to industry and WSDA much faster and with fewer errors, he stated. “The new system is a great marketing tool for industry and WSDA,” he explained.

Twenty-seven percent of the 132 fruit and vegetable packers participating in Washington’s certificate-of-compliance program are now on-line. The percent is steadily increasing as packers become aware of the features of the new system, Quigley explained.

The WSA is the state’s oldest and largest technology trade association. At its annual awards dinner, WSA recognizes Washington companies and agencies demonstrating innovation and excellence in technology. More than 900 persons are expected to attend the event at the Westin Hotel in Seattle. The other seven awards being presented Feb. 26 are *Most Promising New Technology*, *Most Promising New Company*, *Business Product of the Year*, *Consumer Product of the Year*, *Service Provider of the Year*, *Reinvention*, and *Outstanding Service to the Community*.

The agriculture industry is Washington’s largest employer, providing jobs to more than 170,000 people and contributing more than \$29 billion to the state’s economy. Included in the \$29 billion figure is nearly \$6 billion in commodity production.

For more information on the WSA annual awards dinner, contact WSA at (206) 448-3033, or visit their Web site at www.wsa.org.

MORE

WSDA technology award– 2 of 2
(Date)

For more information on WSDA's fruit and vegetable inspection program, contact Jim Quigley at (360) 902-1833 or visit WSDA's Web site at www.agr.wa.gov, and click respectively on "Inspection Services" and "Fruit & Vegetable Inspection."

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